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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CE](#) [SZ](#)
SUBJECT: ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING OF SRI LANKA CONTACT GROUP:
SWISS PLAN TO ATTEND

REF: SECSTATE 140812

Classified By: Poloff Eric Lundberg, Reasons 1.4 b/d

1.(C) Summary: Switzerland plans to send a delegation to the September 27 organizational meeting of the Sri Lanka Contact Group, but officials are determined that Swiss participation should not compromise their ability to interact with both sides in the conflict. Emboffs underlined the USG's interest in input from potential contact group partners with regard to both the structure and membership of the contact group(s) and encouraged Swiss officials to present their ideas in Washington. Sensitive that some might view Bern as soft on the Tamil Tigers, officials stressed the importance of toughness, but also for the ability for small players like Switzerland to maintain "back channels" in support of a peace. End summary.

2.(C) Swiss DFA deputy Asia director Aldo DeLuca, desk officer Boris Richard, and Peace Policy section deputy Markus Heiniger told Pol/Econ Counselor and Poloff on August 31 that the Swiss government is trying to balance its interest in participating in a Sri Lanka contact groups with its fear of being perceived as one-sided. While committed to attending the September 27 Washington meeting, the Swiss officials were interested in USG clarification concerning the focus of the meeting, countries invited, and the intended scope of the contact group's activities. DeLuca noted that the original USG demarche in the spring had focused on financial sanctions and an arms embargo against the Tamil Tigers. Switzerland would perceive a need to address the activities of the Sri Lankan government as well, citing the Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission's recent conclusion that Sri Lankan armed forces were responsible for the massacre of 17 aid workers. DeLuca also sought assurances that the Sri Lankan government itself would not be a contact group member.

3.(C) Emboffs reminded the officials that the purpose of their demarches thus far was to seek the views of our partners on how the contact group should be organized. The membership and details of the contact groups were not yet set in stone. The USG was pushing this initiative, however, due

to the need for a group broader than the co-chairs which could pressure the parties to engage in peace talks. Certainly, reducing the Tigers' ability to commit terrorism was an important part of that.

4.(C) Heiniger, who is the Swiss government's point man on the Sri Lankan peace process, expressed doubt that sanctions would positively influence Tamil Tiger behavior. "They've never responded to force in the past," he said. Asked what had brought them to the ceasefire in 2002, Heiniger offered that they must have felt that they could achieve their ends better at the negotiating table, though he conceded that the post-9/11 environment probably played a role. Unprompted, Heiniger asserted that Switzerland was not soft on the Tigers. Following the August 2005 assassination of Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Kadirgamar, Bern had imposed a visa ban and prohibition on meetings with Tamil Tiger leaders. That said, Bern had decided not to join the EU's recent listing of the Tamil Tigers out of concern that such an action would have shut off a further Swiss role in the peace process.

5.(C) Comment: Swiss officials do want a place at the table in any group addressing the Sri Lankan conflict, but their bottom line is not endangering their ability to engage both sides. At the September 27 meeting, they will be looking to verify that human rights is a part of the contact group's focus, as demonstrated in Swiss DCM Witwer's comments in reftel. Having backstopped the Norwegian mediators in the past, the Swiss may take their cue from Oslo in their decision whether to join the contact group. End comment.
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